

Resolution No.: 16-710
Introduced: July 29, 2008
Adopted: September 16, 2008

**COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

By: Planning, Housing, and Economic Development and Public Safety Committees

SUBJECT: Special Appropriation to the FY09 Operating Budget
Montgomery County Government
Department of Housing and Community Affairs
Fire Sprinklers for Group Homes; \$150,000
(Source of Funds: General Fund Reserves)

Background

1. Section 308 of the Montgomery County Charter provides that a special appropriation: a) may be made at any time after public notice by news release; b) must state that the special appropriation is necessary to meet an unforeseen disaster or other emergency or to act without delay in the public interest; c) must specify the revenues necessary to finance it; and d) must be approved by no fewer than six members of the Council.
2. The NPFA Life Safety Code, which has been adopted by the State and the County, requires that sleeping areas have a second means of egress of 5.7 square feet (or 5 square feet at grade) or, as an alternative, have an automatic sprinkler system. The County includes this standard in its requirements for homes seeking a County group home license.
3. Many group homes are older homes that were built before the egress standard was adopted and are not compliant. Many of these same group homes are operated by non-profit organizations that provide supportive housing for publicly-funded clients with disabilities. These organizations cannot afford the additional cost of installing an automatic sprinkler system or retrofitting a home with larger windows.
4. In FY 2008, the Council appropriated \$250,000 to assist group home providers who are serving primarily publicly-funded clients by funding a program to install automatic sprinkler systems in group homes. The program is available to existing group homes with primarily publicly-funded clients. The homeowner must commit to using the home as a group home for 3-years after the sprinkler system is installed or repay the County at a pro-rated amount. Resolution 16-259 stated that the \$250,000 was not an estimate of the full cost of the effort.

5. The Planning, Housing, and Economic Development and Public Safety Committees met jointly on July 17, 2008 to receive an update on the effort to install these sprinkler systems. The Committees were told that sprinkler systems have been installed or are in the pipeline for 27 group homes that are on the priority one or two lists developed by the Departments of Health and Human Services and Fire and Rescue Services. FY 2009 funds will be needed to complete four of these systems and to continue to address approximately 15 other group homes that have been determined to be "non-window compliant." There was some delay in start up because multiple contractors and approvals are required. Housing and Community Affairs feels the remaining systems can be installed more quickly and Fire and Rescue Services has worked to expedite final approvals for the sprinkler systems.
6. The Planning, Housing, and Economic Development and Public Safety Committees agreed that the County should continue to fund this effort in order to ensure that group homes serving vulnerable populations meet fire safety standards and recommends the Council appropriate \$150,000 for this purpose. The Committees agreed to meet again in about six months to review the effort.
7. Notice of public hearing was given, and a public hearing was held.

Action


The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland, approves the following action:

The County Council approves a special appropriation to the FY09 Operating Budget of the Montgomery County Government, Department of Housing and Community Affairs, to fund a program to assist eligible group homes with installing automated fire sprinklers.

<u>Personnel Services</u>	<u>Operating Expenses</u>	<u>Capital Outlay</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Source of Funds</u>
\$0	\$150,000	\$0	\$150,000	General Fund Reserves

This special appropriation is necessary to act without delay and in the public interest.

This is a correct copy of Council action.


Linda M. Lauer, Clerk of the Council